

REMARKS

In view of the above amendment, Applicants believes the pending application is in condition for allowance. Claims 1 and 3-9 are now present in this application, of which claim 1 is independent. By this amendment, claim 2 has been canceled and claims 1 and 8 have been amended. Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

Priority Under 35 U.S.C. § 119

Applicants thank the Examiner for acknowledging Applicants' claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119, and receipt of the certified priority document.

Information Disclosure Citation

The Examiner has not provided Applicants with an initialed copy of the PTO-1449 form filed with the Information Disclosure Statement filed on April 11, 2005. An initialed copy thereof is respectfully requested from the Examiner in the next Office Action.

The Examiner has provided Applicants with an initialed copy of the PTO-SB08 form filed with the Information Disclosure Statement filed on December 16, 2006. Therefore, no outstanding issues remain with respect to the consideration of this Information Disclosure Statement.

Drawings

Since no objection has been received, Applicants assume that the drawings are acceptable and that no further action is necessary. Confirmation thereof in the next Office Action is respectfully requested.

Claim Objections

The Examiner has objected to claim 8 because of several informalities. In order to overcome this objection, Applicants have amended claim 8 in order to correct the deficiencies pointed out by the Examiner. Reconsideration and withdrawal of this objection are respectfully requested.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, 2nd Paragraph

Claims 3 and 9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, 2nd Paragraph. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The Examiner has set forth certain instances wherein the claim language lacks antecedent basis.

In order to overcome this rejection, Applicants have amended claim 1 to provide antecedent basis for each of the deficiencies specifically pointed out by the Examiner. Applicants respectfully submit that the claims, as amended, particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103

Claims 1, 4, and 5 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,275,454 to Boutaghou et al; claims 6 and 7 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Boutaghou et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,700,838 to McDaniel; and claim 8 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Boutaghou in view of McDaniel and U.S. Patent No. 6,661,605 to Pust et al. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

A complete discussion of the Examiner's rejection is set forth in the Office Action, and is not being repeated here.

With regard to the rejection of claims 1 and 3-9, while not conceding the appropriateness of the Examiner's rejection, but merely to advance prosecution of the instant application, Applicants respectfully submit that independent claim 1 has been amended to include the features of objected-to allowable claim 2, thereby automatically placing independent claim 1 into condition for allowance, along with dependent claims 3-9.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner states that claim 2 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form and that claims 3 and 9 would be allowable if rewritten to depend from claim 2.

Applicants thank Examiner for the early indication of allowable subject matter in this application. As set forth above, the features of objected-to claim 2 have been added into independent claim 1 and therefore independent claim 1 should be in condition for allowance. Also, claims 3-9 depend, either directly or indirectly, from independent claim 1, and are therefore allowable based on their dependence from claim 1, which is believed to be allowable.

Additional Cited References

Since the remaining references cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject the claims, but have merely been cited to show the state of the art, no comment need be made with respect thereto.

Office Action

The Office Action contains numerous characterizations of the invention, the claims, and the related art, with which Applicants do not necessarily agree. Unless expressly noted otherwise, Applicants decline to subscribe to any statement or characterization in the Office Action.

Conclusion

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding rejections and that they be withdrawn. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and as such, the present application is in condition for allowance.

If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone Chad D. Wells, Registration No. 50,875, at (703) 205-8000, in the Washington, D.C. area.

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Amendment is respectfully requested.

Application No. 10/694,220
Amendment dated November 29, 2006
Reply to Office Action of August 30, 2006

Docket No.: 0630-1863P

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

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Respectfully submitted,

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